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CHAPTER XXII

THE INSTITUTION OF PATRONQMOBA

566 567 631 423 THE term "feudalism" is rendered in Georgian by *patronqmoba*, which is a compound word consisting of *patroni* and *qmoba*. *Qmoba* is the abstract form of *qma*, the serf or slave, and means serfdom or slavery. The word *patroni* is the Georgian variant of the Roman *patronus* and is first met with in Georgian documents dating from the eleventh century.

571 As the etymological meaning of the word indicates *patronqmoba* denoted an organization or society based on the relationship between master and slave. The word *patroni* had several meanings. It denoted:—

1. A private owner or possessor, as for instance *tsikhis patroni*—owner of a fortress: *midzis patroni*—owner of land.
2. A tutor, protector or guardian: *Matiane Kartlisai*, for instance, relating the way in which Giorgi, the minor heir-apparent of Bagrat IV, was brought up, says, "They chose the sister of Bagrati as his *patroni* or tutoress".[1]

[643] 3. A king or sovereign: the historian of King David Aghmashenebeli, speaking of the service rendered to the King by Giorgi Dchqondideli, the *Mdsignobart-Ukhutsesi*, says that "he was from boyhood in the service of the *patroni*", i.e. of the King.[2] The Historian of Queen Tamara (1184–1212) uses *patroni* particularly frequently in the sense of "king" or "queen".[3]

Patroni thus denoted not only an owner, protector and guardian, but also even the supreme ruler of the country, the King himself. The *didebulni* officials and the powerful *gvarisbvilni* ("sons of *gvarni*") were also, like the kings, called *patroni*.

631 566 423 571 Just as *patroni* denoted owner, protector, guardian, lord and king, so the term *qma* also in its turn was used to denote "a subject", even though he were a *didebuli aznauri* or a *didebuli* official. The Historian of Queen Tamara speaks, for instance, of the Queen's *didebulni*, namely of Zakharia Panaskerteli and Daniel Kalmakheli as "the good *qmani*, the favoured of the *patroni*", that is as of good subjects of the sovereign. The Historian of Queen Tamara calls the Shirvanshah, whose

[1] *Matiane Kartlisai*, p. 226. [2] *Tzkhovrebai Mepet-Mepisa Davitisa*, p. 301.
[3] *Istoriani da Azmani*, p. 418.

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domains were under the Queen's protection, "the *qma* of Tamara the King", while he describes his condition as *qmad qola*—holding as *qma*.

Just as the King was *patroni* of his *didebuli* subjects, so the latter, the *qmani didebulni*, were in their turn *patronni* (plural) of their subordinates, who also were called *qmani*. The *qmani* too had their own *qmani* and were consequently *patronni* in their turn.

Patronqmoba was the mainspring of the public life of the country. It characterized not only the social and economic life but also the political and state order of the Kingdom. *Patroni* denoted, as it has already been seen, the king, the lord, the guardian, the protector and the owner-proprietor, while *qma* meant the subject as well as the one under the protection of another or owning obedience to another.

The characteristic features of *patronqmoba* in Georgia, as of feudalism in Western Europe, were twofold, namely the personal relation and the land relation; to the personal aspect of the institution of *patronqmoba*, as affecting the individual, reference has already been made. The other aspect of the institution relating to the holding of land was called in Georgian *shedsqaleba* which in meaning and substance is equivalent to the early Western European *beneficium* or the later *feudum*.

Shedsqaleba was particularly important to the high and influential officials of the state. As "the loyal and faithful service" of the great officials was of great value to the King he would naturally bestow *shedsqaleba*, or benefices, mostly on these high officials, and the King's *shedsqalebulni*—*beneficiarii*—were generally the great state officials and members of the aristocracy to whom fell the greater part of benefices.

Shedsqaleba was the very essence of *patronqmoba*, and it is necessary to examine the working of it in order to arrive at a correct understanding of the character of feudal institutions in Georgia. The Historian of Queen Tamara, for instance, states that the Queen *sheidsqala* Guzani, "*Patroni* of Shavsheti and Klarjeti to the seat of the ancient Tao(khi)an kings".[1] *Sheidsqala*, which is the past perfect tense of *shedsqaleba*, is herein used in the sense of "elevated". Guzani was appointed the *eristavt-eristavi* of the province of Tao. *Shedsqaleba* thus meant the conferring by the King of a high office.

Another passage from the same source shows that *sheds-*

[1] *Istoriani da Azmani*, p. 434.

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631 566 423 571 *qaleba* or *dsqaloba* was followed by blessing. Of Zakharia Mkhargrdzeli the Annalists write that the Queen "conferred *dsqaloba* by blessing upon his son, Zakharia, also"; elsewhere again it is stated that she "*sheidsqalnes* and blessed many other *didebulni* also".[1] Blessing or *dalotsva* on occasion formed part of the ceremony of conferring of every high office.

Those of the lesser *qmani* who showed great zeal, loyalty and devotion were, of course, correspondingly *shedsqalebulni*. If a *qma* who had distinguished himself received such a favour for the first time, he was *shedsqalebuli* by being newly blessed, or if he already held some office, or was entrusted with another duty he was *shedsqalebuli momatebita*, that is "additionally".

[554] At the time of blessing the beneficiary or *shedsqalebuli* received from his lord ceremonial investiture; for instance, the *Mandaturt-Ukhutsesi* was presented with a gold ferule; the *Amir-Spasalari* received a golden sword. The *eristavni* and *eristavt-eristavni* had a banner each as an ensign which distinguished their office and, although direct information is not available, it is probable that they received this symbol from the King at the time of investiture.

It is not known whether the *shedsqalebuli* took the oath of fealty, but it is certain that at the time of blessing *taqvaneba* —adoration—was laid down as a rule.

631 554 428 571 647 The holding of lands and provinces was directly connected with the holding of office. The lands or provinces so connected with or dependent upon the office held by the *shedsqalebuli* were called *sapatio*, i.e. held in honour.

Besides these *sapatio* provinces and lands, the King's "loyal and devoted" state officers also received by way of *shedsqaleba* the so-called *sakharajoni*. *Sakharajo* is derived from *kharaji*, meaning "the tax", and denotes "for *kharaji*"; *sakharajo* towns therefore constituted grants, the taxes from which the beneficiary could divert to his own benefit.

Sakharajo towns, fortresses and villages were granted to *shedsqalebulni* on different conditions, some as *sakutari*, meaning "own", and some as *sanakhevrot*, meaning "for half". *Sakutari*—own—should not be understood as if the grantee received the towns as his own possessions. The term has no relation to the actual ownership of the places granted; it implies only that the whole of the taxes collected from them were given to the recipient as his own for his own use, while in the case of *sanakhevrot* (for half)—granted towns the grantee

[1] *Istoriani da Azmani*, p. 442.

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was given the benefit of only half the amount of the taxes collected.

Shedsqaleba thus meant the bestowing of favour by the King or some other *patroni* upon a *qma* by conferring an office or some other exclusive privilege and granting or conceding *sapatio* or *sakharajo* (*sakutarit* or *sanakhevrot*) towns, fortresses, villages and lands.

On occasions a *shedsqalebuli qma* received a heritable grant *mamulobit* or *samamulot*; grants *mamulobit* were conferred both upon the grantee and his descendants.

The terms of *sapatio* and *nadsqalobevi* grants were subject to variation. When a state official was removed from his office, the *sapatio* property, which he held as a perquisite of that office, reverted to the crown, but the King did not always strictly enforce his reversionary rights and occasionally left some of the properties in the family of the former beneficiary. Thus, for instance, when Queen Tamara deprived Qubasar of the office of *Amir-Spasalari*, she took into consideration his "slavish service" to her father, Giorgi III, and "deprived him of nothing except the office and of Lori".[1] Lori constituted, among other places, the *sapatio* property of the *Amir-Spasalari*, and once Qubasar was deprived of the office of *Amir-Spasalari*, Lori also was taken from him, but the remainder of his property—his *didebuli koneba*—the Queen left to him. In like manner when Gamrekeli, the *Amir-Spasalari*, died, because of the services he had rendered, "except Tmogvi, of nothing else were his sons deprived" by command of Tamara.[2]

Sapatio and *nadsqalobevi* property thus tended to become hereditary; the former rarely, but the latter more often. But it is noteworthy, as is evident from later *sigelni*, that neither the property granted *mamulobit* nor that which became in course of time hereditary, was ever considered to be fully and completely the private property of the *shedsqalebuli* or of his descendants. The holders of such properties, although called owners, were not in fact in a position to sell, exchange or donate them without the express permission of the King; only by "consulting" and by "permission" of the *patroni* could they deal in these properties. It follows therefore that the supreme owner of the *mamulobit* (heritable) and *nadsqalobevi* property remained after all the donor-*patroni* himself and not the *shedsqalebuli* or grantee.

According to the degree of *dsqaloba* bestowed, a *qma*

[1] *Istoriani da Azmani*, p. 406. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 444.

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might be either simply *shedsqalebuli* or "superlatively" (*aghmatebit*) *shedsqalebuli*.

In time of war *qmani* fought alongside and under the leadership of their respective *patronni*. From the Historian of Queen Tamara, we learn that during military operations *qmani* closely surrounded their *patronni*; after a stiff hand-to-hand fight "rejoiced", says the Historian, "as finders . . . *patroni* of his *qma* and *qma* of his *patroni*";[1] and, as he states elsewhere, during a battle "*patroni* forged ahead of his *qma* and *qma* ahead of his *patroni*".[2]

Not only in war, but also in daily life when a *patroni* travelled, he was accompanied by his *qmani*. The suites of the great *didebulni* included *aznaurni*; such *aznaurni* were called *aznaurni tanamqolni* or accompanying, that is *aznaurni* companions; their duty was to defend their patrons. *Qmani* who lived on the estates of their patrons were called *mamulis katsni* or "men of the estates".[3]

Whether all the *mamulis katsni* were, irrespective of their status, obliged to accompany their patrons in war it is difficult to say, but it is certain that the bounden duty of *shedsqalebulni qmani* was "faithful service". This obligation of a *shedsqalebuli qma* was definitely stated in the *dsqalobis dsigni*.

As yet only one *dsgalobis dsigi* or "book" has been discovered which is of the first half of the thirteenth century. This document, which was granted by the Church, gives an incomplete, but fairly approximate idea as to the manner in which *dsqaloba* was bestowed. Only on exceptional occasions after great wars and expeditions, or particular and extraordinary service, was *dsqaloba* conferred by the *patroni* himself on his own initiative; on all other occasions of everyday life *dsqaloba* had to be solicited by the loyal and *msakhureuli qma* himself; his supplication and petition had to proceed by way of a reminder that the *patroni* might reward the *msakhureuli*, or deserving, *qma*. The Catholicos Mikel speaks thus, for instance, in his *dsaqolobis dzigi*:

> "When first the invasion of the Khorazmians and then that of the Tatars devastated this kingdom and laid waste some countries (i.e. provinces) and villages, and thou and thy brothers were overtaken by misfortune, and as a result had lost whatever lands and properties you possessed, and were unable in consequence to subsist . . . hast submitted to us thy supplication so that we might confer *dsqaloba* upon

[1] *Istoriani da Azmani*, p. 373. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 421.
[2] Abuseridze Tbeli, in *Kmnilebi*, II, 120-7.

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thee, Vaché Guaramisdze, and grant thee subsistence . . . *samamulot* to serve the Church. . . . We have listened to thy supplication and grant *samamulot* to thee Vaché Guaramisdze, our *Msakhurt-Ukhutsesi* and thy sons and descendants, the village of Oromasheni in return for services (*samsakhured*) to the Church." [1]

It has already been stated that *shedsqaleba* proved particularly beneficial to the high state officials and to the great *gvarishvilni* and that to them fell the greater part of the benefices. *Shedsqaleba* enriched the "loyal and obedient" *gvariani* officials. From the works of the Historians of David Aghmashenebeli and Queen Tamara we learn that in the twelfth century, especially during the reigns of Giorgi III and his daughter, the over-generous use of *shedsqaleba* on the part of the kings, made it possible for an enormous amount of wealth both movable and immovable to accumulate in the hands of the *didebulni* and *shedsqalebulni*, rendering them owners of immense estates and of numerous *qmani*.

In order to curb the power of the grasping and unruly *didgvarianni* the kings began to follow a policy of replacing them by persons of *ugvaro* or *uazno* descent who were personally dependent on the goodwill of the Court. By means of *shedsqaleba* the King made strong his "loyal and faithful servant", enriched him materially and increased the number of his *qmani*. Thus by the side of the *didgvariani* officials there came into existence in each generation a group of *msakhureuli shedsqalebulni* who, although they lacked the distinction of birth and the influence of class, were at the same time very strong, since they had been raised to the patronage of numerous towns, fortresses and villages. But the over-generous character of the beneficence shown towards the promoted *ugvaro* officials and administrators in the end defeated its own purpose; and the system of *shedsqaleba* served to perpetuate those evils to eradicate which the kings had directed all their energies and their favours. *Shedsqaleba* gradually raised the new favourites, these *ugvaro* officials, to a position of influence and power; in course of time it concentrated in their hands new accumulations of wealth; the administrative positions which they held gained them a steadily increasing political influence, and their descendants, finding themselves in the position of great hereditary land-owners, easily forgot their *uazno* or *ugvaro* origins and their indebtedness to the Crown. In these circumstances their ambitions proved as matchless and their

[1] S. Kakabadze, *XIII Saukunis pirveli nakhevris Sakartvelos Katolikosebi* (*The Georgian Catholicoses of the first half of Thirteenth Century*).

6; Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
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einen vom Hinterkopf herabhaengenden, dem chinesischen gleichen Zopf abrasiert. . . ."[27]

From the evidence of the various investigators which we have presented above, it may be seen that if we accept the opinion of Countess Uvarov that the Khevsurs of the Caucasus originated from the Cossacks of the Dniepr, we might logically assume that the Circassians, the Udins and the Hittites are also of Slavonic origin, or that all these peoples, including the Hittites, borrowed this custom from the Cossacks of the Dniepr (*Zaparojtsi*)—which, in short, is a paradox.

We think that this custom existed among the Khevsurs for many centuries before the *Zaparojtsi* made their appearance in history. In the meantime the fact of the presence of this custom among other peoples of the Caucasus besides the Khevsurs shows their possible relation with each other and points to Asia Minor as the place of origin of this custom, whence it was brought to the Caucasus. Later, in the new era, this custom could have been borrowed by the Cossacks of the Dniepr from the Circassians, who occupied the northern slopes of the Caucasian ridge and controlled the adjacent territory around the Sea of Azov and the Russian steppe,[28] whence they were gradually forced out by the newcomers into the mountains of the Caucasus, where they resided until the Russian conquest in the second half of the nineteenth century. This conquest resulted in the mass emigration of the Circassians into the lands then occupied by the Turks.

To the above mentioned factors revealing the heterogeneity in the composition of the social groups among the Georgian Highlanders must be added the different ways and manners of adoption as practiced by the people which made relatively easy access for foreign elements into the communities, where they were admitted as full-fledged members and in time were gradually absorbed and assimilated.

There are different ways and manners of adoption. A person can be adopted either by the whole community as such, or he may be adopted by a private family or a private person. When the

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[27] *Ibid.*, 13.
[28] Klaproth: a, 312.

6; Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1

person is adopted by the community the procedure has a religious meaning and character. So, in order to become a member of the Pshav community, the stranger is obliged to get membership in the sanctuary (*Khati*) of the community and through this act he automatically becomes a member of the social group—the community. He has to bring the sacrifice prescribed by custom and treat all members of the community with a feast. The sacrifice consists of an ox and a sheep, which are killed in a ritualistic manner (the throat is cut, as the Hebrews of the Old Testament did, and the blood is used for sanctification—cleansing of the person by anointing, washing or rubbing) by the attendant of the sanctuary, and a quantity (*chapa*) of wine is brought as a sacrifice to the patron saint of the community and used as a supply for the feast. The feast, which is arranged in the holy precincts of the sanctuary and supplied with the sacrificed victuals, has a sacramental meaning. After this feast the stranger is admitted as a full-fledged member of the community and is put under the same marriage regulations as every native member of the group.

The adoption by a social group, as mentioned above, did not exclude the possibility of a private adoption, that is, the adoption of one individual by another, or the entrance of an individual into a private family as one of its members.

These people practiced different methods of adoption, such as "breast-biting," anointing with consecrated oil, hair-cutting, exchange of bullets, "silver-eating," and the custom called *zedsidze* (adoption of a son-in-law). Adoption by "breast-biting" consists in touching by the candidate with his teeth the bare breast of his prospective foster mother, the wife of the head of the family, or generally the eldest woman in the family.

This custom was practiced throughout Georgia and among other peoples of the Caucasus in past times and is still in existence. It is known under the Georgian name of *dzudzus kbena*, meaning "breast-biting."

The Svans practice a very interesting form of "breast-biting" which they call *Linturali*.[29]

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[29] Linturali: 138.

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1

fifteen bottles.[26] Among the Svans, for the commemoration ceremonies for the dead, the relatives of the deceased person bring, from every home, thirty small loaves of bread, called *lekhde*. These loaves are for consumption during the feast;[27] or the Svans,[28] before the commemoration celebration, visit all the relatives and collect the necessary supplies for the feast.

From the examples given in this chapter, we notice that in every group and community is found a clearly marked group solidarity expressed in reciprocal assistance and co-operation. We see that this phenomenon is evident not only in the field and home work, but is manifested by all groups of the Georgian nation —by Highlanders and Lowlanders alike, in every manner of life, in the customs connected with childbirth as well as in wedding ceremonies and funerals, and in time of danger everyone finds protection and refuge among his kinsmen. The last mentioned fact is clearly illustrated in the customs of blood-feud, where every offender is supported by his relatives; on the other hand, kinsmen of the victim seek redress and punishment of the culprit. In conclusion, we may admit that the social life of the communities among the Georgian Highlanders is based on a complex of customs, clearly defined and enforced by the group, co-ordinating and regulating the social and individual life of the people, creating between the members interdependence and symmetry of action, reciprocity with security, where every assistance is accordingly returned and repaid.

[see cat. 116 p. 162 ff. -- Analyst]

[26] Radde: d, 87.
[27] Eristov: b, 41.
[28] Stoinav: 439.